



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing

Syria's Humanitarian Crisis: What More Can We Do?

Panel I



Dr. Ahmad Tarakji is the President of the Syrian American Medical Society, a non-profit, non-political professional and medical relief organization that provides assistance to Syrians in need and represents thousands of Syrian American medical professionals in the United States. Dr. Ahmad is also a current Board member of the SAMS Foundation. He is a cardio-thoracic surgeon in California, and a former clinical assistant professor at Stanford University. At SAMS, Dr. Ahmad spearheads and participates in numerous initiatives, including providing trauma and critical care courses for Syrian physicians and nurses, overseeing SAMS's advocacy work, and chairing the two previous SAMS International Conferences in Turkey and the most recent International Conference in Sarajevo, Bosnia.



Joel Charny is the Director of Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) USA. NRC is one of the leading humanitarian agencies in the world responding to forced displacement due to conflict and natural disasters. Prior to joining NRC USA in 2016, Mr. Charny was the Vice President for Humanitarian Policy and Practice at InterAction. He was responsible for leading InterAction's work on humanitarian response, which involved engaging with the U.S. government, the United Nations, and member non-governmental organizations on both practical and policy matters. Prior to joining InterAction in 2010, Mr. Charny was the Vice President for Policy with Refugees International. In his tenure with Refugees International he conducted humanitarian assessment missions to Pakistan in the aftermath of 9/11, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, the Chinese border with North Korea, Indonesia and Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the tsunami, the Central African Republic, Burma, Syria,

Kenya and Sudan. Mr. Charny joined Refugees International in 2000 after working for four years in Cambodia as Deputy Program Manager with the CARERE project of the United Nations Development Program. Prior to working for the UNDP in Cambodia, Mr. Charny spent sixteen years with Oxfam America. He has an A.B degree in European History from Brown University and a Masters degree in international education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.



Richard Leach serves as the President and CEO of World Food Program USA, non-profit organization that seeks to shape U.S. public policy and generate resources to address global hunger. From 2006–2008, Leach developed the plan for the World Health Organization to halt the production and trade in counterfeit drugs. Leach also developed an initiative to help ensure that essential health technologies are incorporated within the health systems of developing countries. From 2003–2005, Leach launched and directed a global campaign in collaboration with the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, the World Health Organization, and the American Cancer Society. This effort culminated in an international conference where leaders from over 30 countries adopted the specific policies to address tobacco use within their respective nations. Leach helped the Alliance for Representative Democracy expand its national campaign to ensure that civic education is included within the curriculum of all public schools in the United States. From 1996–1997, Leach helped the World Wildlife Fund establish a global campaign to unify the organization’s operations throughout the world. In 1993, Leach was appointed by the Clinton Administration, to create and direct the federal government’s childhood immunization campaign at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. From 1991–1993, Leach served as the foreign policy advisor to the U.S. House of Representatives’ Select Committee on Hunger. He served as a member of the American Bar Association’s Task Force on Reform of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Panel II



Sarah Holewinski is a Senior Fellow at the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) focusing on responsible use of force in armed conflict and US policy, and on the board of advisors of Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC). She was most recently deputy chief of staff for policy at the US Mission to the United Nations. For nearly a decade prior, she was executive director of CIVIC, leading efforts to advise warring parties on civilian protection and responsible use of force. In that role, she worked extensively with the US military and its allies and in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, CAR, Burma, and elsewhere. Sarah was named in the Top 100 Most Influential People in Armed Violence Reduction by Action on Armed Violence and received the Truman National Security Project’s award for Extraordinary Impact. She was a member of the Clinton Administration’s White House AIDS Policy team, and consulted for Human Rights Watch, Ford

Foundation, and the William J. Clinton Foundation. Sarah holds degrees from Georgetown and Columbia Universities, and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Naomi Kikoler is the deputy director of the Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide. For six years she developed and implemented the Global Centre for the Responsibility to protect work on populations at risk and efforts to advance R2P globally and led the Centre's advocacy, including targeting the UN Security Council. An adjunct professor at the New School University, she is the author of numerous publications, including the 2013 Nexus Fund series on the emerging powers and mass atrocity prevention and the 2011 report *Risk Factors and Legal Norms Associated with Genocide Prevention* for the United Nations Office on the Prevention of Genocide and the Jacob Blaustein Institute. Prior to joining the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect in 2008, she worked on national security and refugee law and policy for Amnesty International Canada. She has also worked in the Office of the Prosecutor at the U.N. International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement at the Brookings Institution. She holds common law and civil law degrees from McGill University, an MSc in forced migration from Oxford University, where her thesis was on the Rwandan genocide, and a BA from the University of Toronto in international relations and peace and conflict studies. She is a board member of the Canadian Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, a senior fellow at the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, and was called to the Bar of Upper Canada.

Chris Engels is a U.S. lawyer with over 10 years of international experience focusing on international criminal law and criminal justice reform. He is currently Deputy Director for Investigations and Operations for the Commission for International Justice and Accountability (CIJA), in which role he oversees the organization's criminal investigations in Syria and Iraq. His past posts include Head of Section for the INL-funded Justice Sector Support Project-Afghanistan, where he represented the USG as the Co-Chair of the Criminal Law Committee, which advised the Afghan Government on new legislation including the Criminal Procedure Code, Counter-Terrorism Law, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Trafficking Law. Also in Afghanistan, he supported war crimes investigations as a mentor to a team of Afghan lawyers within the government's independent human rights commission investigating crimes committed between the communist period and the fall of the Taliban. He also served as Director of the Criminal Defence Section of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where he provided advice and training to Bosnian defense attorneys representing alleged war criminals. Similarly, he worked as acting Deputy Head of the Defence Section at the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. He was recently Head of Rule of Law for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, where he provided technical support to governmental institutions on war crimes, hate crimes, and CVE and managed a team of national and international staff focusing on analysis of war crimes processing throughout Bosnia. He also worked in the UNMIK Office of the Legal Advisor during the period immediately prior to and following Kosovo's declaration of independence, where he focused on criminal justice and security issues.